

Garrison receives loan for Besse

Photos



NICOLE THOMAS/THE MORNING SUN

Left to Right: Gary Allsup, Will Wake, Peter Morgan, Chuck Banks, Gary Hassenflu, Tad Dunham, and Tim Rogers gather in front of the Bess Hotel for a donation to renovate the building for apartments.

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Garrison Development Corp. is rounding together the last bits of funding for the Besse Hotel renovation project, and is scheduled to start construction as early as September.

The company received the last bulk of funding Tuesday, when USDA Rural Development and the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation presented Garrison president Garrison Hassenflu with a check for \$1.17 million. Tim Rogers, USDA Rural Development housing program director, said that money, given as a low-interest loan, would team with \$8.5 million in tax credits to pay for most of the project.

The housing announcement was made in conjunction with USDA's participation in the Kansas Housing Conference, which kicked off Tuesday at Pittsburg State University. "It took a lot of people working together to make this project happen," Rogers said.

The project has an estimated \$9.7 million price tag for Phase I, which includes the construction of 18 one-bedroom apartments, 22 two-bedroom apartments and nine three-bedroom apartments for a total of 49 units.

Chuck Banks, USDA Rural Development state director, said the project met the spirit of USDA's goals.

"They're using this to renovate a standing facility and put in affordable housing for Pittsburg residents," Banks said.

In a way, it's a lot like Junction City, where they were looking for a building like this to be a cornerstone of their downtown revitalization." Hassenflu said Garrison also had help from other entities, including the city of Pittsburg, which purchased the Peel's property at 409 N. Locust St., to knock down as parking for the building. One of Garrison's requirements for the city was to help provide at least one parking spot for each of the building's 49 units. The speed of the project will depend on outside factors, such as weather, but Hassenflu said he expected the project's completion in the summer of 2009.

Garrison had purchased the building awhile back, but ran into some cost snags, including fire escapes that weren't up-to-code, that pushed up the price and delayed the project a bit.

Hassenflu said Garrison was excited to get started on the project.

"It feels great to get to this point," Hassenflu said. "With a project like this, you can run into so many obstacles.

There are a lot of pieces, and you have to wait until they all fit to proceed. So we're happy to get the construction underway. We're looking forward to a great project."